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SUBJECT: TFI01: TOP OFFICIALS COMMENT ON WAR IN IRAQ

PM RACAN: GOC COMMENTS FOLLOW AGREED LINE ...

1. IN AN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED ON MARCH 22 IN THE MASS MARKET DAILY "JUTARNJI LIST," PRIME MINISTER IVICA RACAN REITERATED HIS GOVERNMENT'S POSITION "REGRETTING" THE LACK OF UNSC UNITY OVER THE DECISION TO USE FORCE TO COMPEL IRAQ TO DISARM. HE SAID THAT ALL OF THE GOVERNMENT'S STATEMENTS FOLLOWED THE AGREED POLICY LINE, BUT HE CLAIMED THAT PRESIDENT MESIC DID NOT CONSULT WITH THE GOVERNMENT BEFORE DELIVERING HIS SPEECH TO THE CROATIAN PEOPLE ON MARCH 20. (IN THAT ADDRESS, MESIC SAID USG MILITARY ACTION "LACKED LEGITIMACY" WITHOUT UNSC APPROVAL.)

2. RACAN SAID CROATIA COULD NOT "SELECTIVELY IGNORE" SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS, AND ASKED RHETORICALLY WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED "HAD WE IGNORED, FOR INSTANCE, SECURITY COUNCIL DECISIONS ON ICTY AND STOPPED COOPERATION." RACAN POINTED OUT THAT CROATIA HAD GRANTED OVERFLIGHT APPROVAL TO U.S. CIVILIAN AIRCRAFT CARRYING MILITARY PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT. IN ADDITION, THE U.S. COULD USE CROATIAN AIRPORTS FOR FUELING, WHICH WAS "MORE THAN OFFERED BY SOME OF THE COUNTRIES THAT WERE FORMALLY ALLIED WITH THE U.S.," THE PM SAID.

MESIC AND TOMCIC SAY STATE LEADERSHIP UNITED ON WAR IN IRAQ

3. PRESIDENT STJEPAN MESIC RESPONDED TO RACAN'S MARCH 22 INTERVIEW BY DENYING THE EXISTENCE OF ANY MISUNDERSTANDING BETWEEN HIM AND THE GOVERNMENT ON THE IRAQI CRISIS. HE SAID THAT THE FOREIGN POLICY LEADERSHIP AGREED ON A SINGLE STANCE; HIS SPEECH SIMPLY CAME AT THE SAME POSITION FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE.

4. PARLIAMENT SPEAKER ZLATKO TOMCIC (WHO IS ALSO PRESIDENT OF THE HSS, THE SECOND LARGEST COALITION PARTY) TOLD THE PRESS THERE WAS NO DIFFERENCE IN VIEW ON IRAQ AMONG THE PRESIDENT, THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE SPEAKER. TOMCIC EXPRESSED THE BELIEF THAT A UNILATERAL MILITARY ACTION ENDANGERED THE FUNCTIONING OF A WHOLE SERIES OF WORLD INSTITUTIONS, INCLUDING THE UN, NATO AND THE EU. "IF THE ACTION ENDS SOON, WE WILL ALL COME OUT OF THIS LESS DAMAGED; IF IT TAKES LONG, CONSEQUENCES FOR THE WORLD'S LEGAL SYSTEM WILL BE HARSH," TOMCIC SAID.

DEPUTY PM GORAN GRANIC CHALLENGES U.S. CRITICISM

5. THE LOCAL PRESS QUOTED ON MARCH 23 DEPUTY PM GORAN GRANIC AS SAYING THAT "IT IS TRAGIC TO SEE HOW MUCH AMBASSADOR ROSSIN GOT LOST IN TIME AND SPACE," EXPLAINING HE MEANT THIS IN THE CONTEXT OF "ALL THOSE IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY WHO ALLOWED THEMSELVES MUCH GREATER RIGHTS THAN ARE USUAL IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, BOTH WITH REGARD TO THIS AND THE FORMER GOVERNMENT." GRANIC ADDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING ANY FORM OF POSSIBLE U.S. "PUNISHMENT," AS THE TITLE OF AMBASSADOR'S INTERVIEW HAD SUGGESTED.

COMMENT

6. THE AMBASSADOR MET MARCH 24 WITH PM RACAN TO CALM THE RHETORIC IN THE LOCAL MEDIA REGARDING THE GOC'S POSITION ON THE IRAQ CRISIS. THE ACCOUNT OF THIS MEETING IS BEING PROVIDED SEPTTEL.

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